



THE CONNECTION

CONNECTIONAL LAY COUNCIL
AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL ZION CHURCH

October 2006

2006 Connectional Lay Council Theme and Focus

“Fulfilling the Mission of Laity Through: Leadership”

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Special points of interest:

- Lay Sunday Program
- Litany for Life Members Stoles
- Convention Notes
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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

The quadrennial theme for the Connectional Lay Council is, "Fulfilling the Mission of Laity through: Enlightenment; Leadership; Stewardship; Praise, Worship and Celebration. Beginning August 1, 2006 and throughout July 31, 2007, our focus will be centered on Leadership.

While countless numbers of books and articles have been written on the topic and many scriptural references are readily available for advice and application, leadership skills, qualities and effectiveness continue to be a tremendous challenge for individuals who seek to perfect these qualities. In my opinion, the challenge should be welcomed by church leaders, in particular, who desire to excel in the execution of the roles and responsibilities that they have been called or assigned to fulfill.

Considering the economic, political, social and religious turmoil that negatively impact the lives of the vast majority of people today, a pervasive (perhaps new) standard of leadership excellence is a critical requirement among the Christian community if, in fact, the devastating consequences of leadership failures in each of these facets of society are to be adequately confronted and defeated.

Leaders at every single level in God's church must be thoroughly prepared and equipped to perform their duties

with reverence and respect for a much greater calling than in any area of society imaginable. Nevertheless, much too often we allow ourselves to select, elect and appoint individuals to leadership positions based upon their popularity, professional skills, wealth, social status, good looks, etc. Consequently and unfortunately, we frequently wound up with some leaders in crucial leadership positions that are too inept, weak, self-serving, unscrupulous, greedy, and corrupt or otherwise unfit for Christ-centered leadership.

In his introduction to The Leadership Bible, Dr. John C. Maxwell made reference to the extensive research done by noted church expert and statistician, George Barna, which concluded the following: "The American church is dying due to lack of strong leadership. In this time of unprecedented opportunity and plentiful resources, the church is actually losing influence. The primary reason is the lack of leadership....Nothing is more important than leadership." I find it quite difficult to disagree with the researcher's findings.

I believe that we must systematically strive, through prayer, meditation and wisdom to choose leaders who themselves are led by the Holy Spirit and inclined to lead others in a like manner. I further believe that it is the incumbent

responsibility of senior church officials to ensure that courses of study are made available and compulsory for all newly assigned leaders and that continuing developmental opportunities are in place for all of its leaders to methodically engage.

None of us ought to settle for anything less than the presence of the highest level of Christ-centered leadership in every organization, local church, district, conference or the episcopate. It is my hope, therefore, that during this coming year the Laity of Zion, with help from members of the clergy, will diligently strive to "Sharpen the Focus" on leadership. I highly recommend that each of us who are already serving in positions of leadership begin the process by examining ourselves against Colossians 1:10, in the hope that we "may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God."

CELEBRATING LAITY Lay Sunday, October 15, 2006

Fulfilling the Mission of Laity Through:

Enlightenment-Leadership-Stewardship-Praise, Worship and Celebration

The third Sunday in October, the anniversary of the denomination, is known as Connectional Lay Sunday when the laity is given special privilege to develop connectional interest. All Pastors are asked to support and encourage efforts by the laity to heighten and promote the Lay Ministry of our denomination.

This Year's Focus

Leadership – Develop, present and execute plans for developing and cultivating of leadership in the local church and community by and with the laity

Special Offering Appeal

This year, all special "Lay Sunday" offerings that are customarily collected and sent to the office of the Connectional Lay Council will be donated to various families that have suffered grave losses due to the aftermath of hurricane Katrina. Pastors and Local Lay Council Presidents are urged to ensure that a special appeal is made for this purpose.

CONNECTIONAL LAY COUNCIL

651. The Connectional Lay Council shall be organized in Regions; equal to the number of and consistent with Episcopal Districts. Each Region shall have a Director. The Directors shall be appointed by the president and confirmed by the Executive Board.

¶652. There shall be organized in each Annual Conference a Lay Council which shall have the power to elect its own officers and shall meet as often as determined by said Council. The Council shall be amenable to the Conference Board of Lay Activities; which shall be appointed by the Bishop. Its officers shall be members in good standing in the Local Lay Council and of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.

¶653. There shall be organized in each Presiding Elder District a Lay Council which shall have the power to elect its own officers and shall meet as often as determined by said Council. The Council shall be amenable to the District Conference. Its officers shall be members in good standing in the Local Lay Council and of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.

¶654. There shall be organized in each local church a Lay Council which shall have the power to elect its own officers and meet at least four times a year. The Local Council shall have the authority to write its own By-Laws as long as they do not conflict with the denomination's By-Laws. It shall be amendable to and its officers confirmed by the Quarterly Conference.

1. If there is no Lay Council in the Local Church; the Pastor shall appoint a convener or organizer during the Church's organization meeting who shall proceed to organize a Local Council and report its progress to each Quarterly Conference

¶655. "In the program of Lay Activities, it shall be understood that the pastor is as elsewhere in all the work of the pastoral charge is in charge, and is responsible for the total program of the church. Nothing in this plan shall interfere with his/her authority and responsibility."

CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS Of The CONNECTIONAL LAY COUNCIL Of The AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL ZION CHURCH

ARTICLE I

Name

1. The name of this organization shall be the Connectional Lay Council of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.

ARTICLE II

Objects and Purpose

1. The object and purpose of this organization shall be to organize the laity of the A.M.E. Zion Church in each Annual and District Conference and local church in the connection to the end that the following objectives may be achieved:

1. Deepen the spiritual life of the laity.
2. Disseminate information
3. Cultivate the denominational loyalty.
4. Expand the denomination through education and evangelism.
5. Promote any other interest of the kingdom of God.

ARTICLE III

Membership

All lay persons who are members of the A.M.E. Zion Church and who are in good standing in their respective churches are eligible to become members of the Connectional Lay Council.

MEMBERSHIP

1. Memberships - The following shall constitute the dues of the Connectional Lay Council:

Member-	Connect.	Regional	Annual Conf.	District	Local
Life-125	25.00	15.00	10.00	25.00	50.00
Sponsor 50.00	25.00	10.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
Sustaining	15.00	5.00	2.50	2.50	
Four Year	8.00	4.00	4.00	2.00	4.00
Regular	5.00	2.00	1.00	.50	.50

2. ****All memberships are divided into categories and mailed to the Membership Chairperson from the local church. Memberships will be accepted from the local church only.**

CONNECTIONAL LAY COUNCIL

3. Voting.

- a. The voting privileges in the Connectional Lay Council shall be contingent upon the paying of dues. In the year of the quadrennial convention all memberships must be paid thirty days prior to the opening date in order to be eligible to vote. All must also have *registered* with the convention.
- b. Voting age of Lay Council Membership: The voting age for membership in the Lay Council shall be set at eighteen (18). This would make it consistent with the legal voting age.

ARTICLE III

Annual Lay Day

Annual Day: The third Sunday in October, the anniversary of the denomination shall be known as Connectional Lay Sunday. The laity will be given special privilege to develop the connectional interest. The Connectional President will be responsible for developing an appropriate program (to be included in the fall issue of "The Connection") It shall include an order of service, connectional interests, including interest evangelism and the several causes of the day and week to be fostered by the local Council.

ARTICLE VII

Stole

The Connectional Lay Council shall adopt a stole that will represent the purpose and commitment of the laity of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. The colors shall be BLACK (representing our pride of race) and GOLD (representing our commitment to excellence). This stole is to be worn on our Annual Day and at our Connectional meetings.

****SUGGESTED ORDER OF SERVICE FOR CONNECTIONAL LAY COUNCIL SUNDAY***

(3rd Sunday in October—Founder's Day)

ORDER OF THE MORNING WORSHIP SERVICE

Prelude

Procession

Processional Hymn

Call to Worship

Choral Response

Invocation—Almighty God, whose compassions fail not, and whose loving kindness reaches into the world's end; We give You humble thanks for the Light of Your Truth; For making paths in the deep waters and highways; and for planting your Church in all the Earth; Grant, we beseech You to send unto us Your Holy Spirit; that with lively faith we may labor abundantly; To make known to all people Your blessed Gift of Eternal Life through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen

Choral Response

Hymn of Worship

Responsive Reading

Gloria Patri

Scripture Lesson

Prayer

Choral Selection

The Apostles' Creed or An Affirmation of Faith (formerly Laity Creed)

Announcements

Ministry of Kindness Offering and Offertory

Lay Council Theme Hymn - "Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah"

Presentation of Lay Sunday Speaker

Hymn of Meditation

Lay Sunday Message (The Minister or an A.M.E. Zion Lay Person)

Invitation to Christian Discipleship

Altar Prayer and Rededication of Laity (Renewal of Church Membership/Baptism Vows)**

Offerings (Regular and Special Connectional Lay Council Offering)***

Offertory

Recessional Hymn - "Onward Christian Laity"

Recession

Benediction

* According to Discipline this should be the third Sunday in October

** The entire congregation is asked to join in.

*** Each local Lay Council is asked to take up this special offering and mail it to the Treasurer

THE CONNECTIONAL LAY COUNCIL STOLE FOR LIFE MEMBERS

Background: The need for a stole to symbolize the purpose and commitment of the laity of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church led the 7th Quadrennial Lay Convention convening in Akron, Ohio in August 2001 to adopt a stole for the Connectional Lay Council. The colors are black (representing our pride and race) and gold (representing our commitment to excellence). This action was ratified at the 2004 General Convention. The 8th Quadrennial Lay Convention convening in New Orleans, Louisiana in August 2005 passed legislation to limit the purchase and wearing of the stole to Life Members.

Purpose of the Litany: To provide a ritual for the dedication of the Life Member Stole and to facilitate an opportunity for commitment to the purpose and objectives of the Connectional Lay Council that promote effective lay ministries that evangelize, encourage and edify laity.

Recommended Procedure: At a time and place mutually agreed upon by the Presiding Elder or Pastor and the lay council president. The Life Members would gather wearing their stoles as specified in the guidelines. The Presiding Elder or Pastor or his/her designee would lead the reading of the litany.

A Litany of Commitment and Dedication of the Life Member Stole

Leader: By the wearing of this stole do you commitment yourself to the objective to **Deepen The Spiritual Life of the Laity?**

Laity: I do. I will endeavor to enhance my participation in the means of grace; Encourage others to "Come With Us To Christ"; I will make an effort to practice good stewardship of time, talent and material resources; Thereby, developing myself and others as Christian disciples.

Leader: By the wearing of this stole do you commitment yourself to the objective to **Disseminate Information?**

Laity: I do. I will endeavor to regularly attend Members Meetings, Quarterly Conference, and other important meetings and pledge to keep others informed of important conclusions; I will seek out the sick and homebound and keep them informed and engaged in the life of the church; I will promote attendance at Lay Council meetings, Lay Academy workshops and other church sponsored educational activities; I will encourage the laity to subscribe to and read official church publications; Thereby, collaborating and cooperating across organizational, institutional and denominational boundaries to minister to the masses.

Leader: By the wearing of this stole do you commitment yourself to the objective to **Cultivate Denominational Loyalty?**

Laity: I do. I will strive to uplift the church and the importance of Zion Methodism; I will endeavor to read and learn the history of Zion Methodism; I will endeavor to study and apply the Articles of Religion of the A.M.E. Zion Church; I will strive to appreciate the structure and practice the polity of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church; Thereby, the laity is challenged to study the history of the denomination and jubilantly celebrate its rich legacy and to motivate future accomplishments.

Leader: By the wearing of this stole do you commitment yourself to the objective to **Expand The Denomination Through Education and Evangelism?**

Laity: I do. I will do your best to attend Members Meetings and Quarterly Conference; Seek to learn more about the church through District Meetings, Annual Conference and Connectional Meetings; I will endeavor to read the Bible daily and any other supplemental literature that will help to increase my faith and relationship with God; I will endeavor to visit some of Zion's historic treasures for the purpose of education; Fellowship with other Zionites and invite the unsaved to "Come With Us To Christ"; Thereby, helping others to know, worship and follow Christ in spirit and in truth.

Leader: By the wearing of this stole do you commitment yourself to the objective to **Promote Any Other Interest Of The Kingdom of God?**

Laity: I do. I will endeavor to volunteer to use my spiritual gifts to support local church programs and activities such as Sunday School, Bible School and Scouting; I will strive to become active in community service projects and community action programs; I will look to encourage the unsaved in the church and the community by witnessing and sharing my faith; It will by my hope and prayer that they might become believers and be led to our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ; Thereby, preparing laity for a life of service in the Kingdom of God.

Leader: We dedicate this stole to the glory of Jesus Christ as Savior, and to His honor as Head of our lives. The stole serves as a symbol and reminder of your commitment to fulfill the purpose and objectives of the Connectional Lay Council. May the stole be worn with determination to edify lay ministries to the glory of God.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight, In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Proverbs 3: 5-6

EDITORIAL

FROM THE EDITOR

By Rhandi M. Stith, Editor

The breakdown for the Episcopal Areas is as follows (effective June 23, 2005):

Piedmont	Bishop G.W.C. Walker, Sr, 8,520
Mid-West	Bishop M.A. Williams, Sr. 1,551
Eastern West Africa	Bishop S.C. Ekeman, Sr.
North Eastern	Bishop G.E. Battle, Jr. 3,118
Eastern North Carolina	Bishop R.K. Thompson 4,441
South Atlantic	Bishop C. Carr 3,785
Mid-Atlantic I	Bishop N. Jarrett 1,175
Mid Atlantic II	Bishop W.M. Brown 1,887
Western	Bishop R.A. Holmes 468
Southwestern Delta	Bishop L. Hunter, Sr. 1,145
Alabama-Florida	Bishop J.E. McCoy 1,939
Western West Africa	Bishop K. Monroe 26,750

Since during the month of October Connectional Lay Sunday is celebrated, I thought that I needed to make the feature story of this issue the Connectional Lay Council Membership list again. Hopefully those Districts with low memberships can use Lay Sunday as a good time to start a membership drive.

When I last published this list in September 2000 issue we had **33** Presiding Elder Districts **50** or less members and out of them **5** Presiding Elder Districts had **no members or no report**. In the last membership report (July 17, 2006) we have **forty-two (42)** Presiding Elder Districts with **fifty (50)** or less members and **eleven (11)** with **0** members.

Are you proud of the figures representing your Episcopal District? Do they reflect your efforts and commitment to the Connectional Lay Council? Do the numbers reflect the majority of your Episcopal area?

Did you that five (5) of the six (6) Presiding Elder Districts in the Western North Carolina Conference maintain over 1,000 memberships every year totaling 8,520. Have you noticed that Western West Africa has 26,750 memberships.

I feel compelled to ask you the some questions that you can answer personally.

1. Our General President is proud to state that we have a membership of over 50,000 members, do you feel that the number is enough? What percentage of the total denomination membership are card carrying members of the Connectional Lay Council?
 2. Does not your local church membership increase each year? Why has your local Lay membership not increased?
 3. If you are still disseminating information does that not also include memberships?
 3. How can a District have less members than some local church membership?
 4. Local Presidents, District Presidents, Conference Presidents and Regional Directors, what have you done to increase the memberships in your area?
 6. Our Quadrennial Theme: "Fulfilling the Mission of Laity Through: Enlightenment ~ Leadership ~ Stewardship ~ Praise, Worship and Celebration" is a **mandate** for the laity, are you keeping this theme in mind as you solicit memberships?
 7. As one of the sheep, how many sheep have you gotten?
- Maybe you should do more than **JUST** collect memberships once a year and your memberships might increase. What kind of innovative ideas and programs are you projecting. Stop being content to say that you are a card carrying member of the Connectional Lay Council. Get up and get motivated.

We would like to remind you that the main thrust of "The Connection" remains to help publicize and promote the Lay Council programs throughout the denomination. Many informative and exciting events are taking place and we want to share them with you. We hope the articles in this Newsletter will inform, and inspire, instruct and guide, encourage and challenge. Hopefully the Lay Council will continue to use this to promote Lay Councils. But I want to remind you that we also would like to receive articles pertaining to the Lay Council from the **local, church, Presiding Elder District, Annual Conferences and Episcopal Districts (300 WORD LIMIT)**. So that the whole denomination knows what your Lay Council is doing or plans to do. This Newsletter will be published quarterly September, December, March and June. The deadlines are as follows: July 30th, October 30th, January 30th and April 30th.

DEADLINE for submission of articles for the next edition will be **October 30th**. Material may be mailed, faxed or e-mailed to the Editor, Miss Rhandi M. Stith, Carrington Arms Apt. 10L, 33 Lincoln Avenue, New Rochelle, New York 10801 1 (914) 235-3596

“FULFILLING THE MISSION OF LAITY THROUGH: LEADERSHIP”

BY MRS. J. FAIRBANKS LEACH, EDUCATION COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON

We are fast-approaching our Annual Connectional Lay Sunday Celebration. The Third Sunday in October, we observe the anniversary of our denomination. Our denomination was Providentially generated in the heart and mind of a Lay person, James Varick, born in Orange County, near Newburgh, NY, in 1750. H.K. Carroll, in 1898, referred to James Varick as a "Pioneer of Ecclesiastical Freedom". Varick, the founder and first Bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, carved a very special niche in the heart of every Lay Person in Zion Methodism. Also, the clergy's heart is 'strangely warmed at the name of Varick. He was a well-trained and independent young man who adhered to his teachings and had a passion for serving God. We would call your attention to the well-written history of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church as written in the "Reality of the Black Church" by our revered historian, Bishop William J. Walls. We commend the book to you. However, let me just mention that this stalwart Layman, named Varick ranks high among those persons who believed that a "Leader Leads". Indeed, Varick was a leader.

While attending our Bi-centennial celebration, this writer was privileged to visit the John Street Methodist Church out of which James Varick walked with some thirty-four other laymen following. I sat on the pew, in the balcony, where Varick sat. My flesh literally crawled as I stepped back in time and imagined the rhetorical, physical, and intellectual discrimination he and others suffered. I could not tarry on that seat, as resentment had begun to creep into my Christian integrity. I felt the heat of passion Varick must have felt as he longed for freedom and self-expression in serving the Most High King. Today, strangely enough, nobody cares how or where you and I worship.

In 1796, the African Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in New York, City. Bishop Walls says of the beginning of Zion Methodism, "the earliest period is a romance, built on faith, hope, fortitude, and courage, inspired by God Almighty and His Son, Jesus Christ, witnessed by the Holy Spirit".

It is in this spirit that we urgently suggest that a grand celebration be observed on October 15, 2006. This is type 210th Anniversary of the "Good Ship Zion". She has sailed on some placid blue waters; other times it would seem that the waters were so turbulent that the ship was doomed and would come apart. Bishop Walls eloquently wrote, "She was built on faith, hope, fortitude, and courage, inspired by God Almighty and His Son, Jesus Christ, witnessed by the Holy Spirit". The "Good Ship Zion has been sustained all this time for the promulgation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Varick would heartily concur with our motto, "Come with Us to Christ".

On page 37, of the 2005 Handbook and Study Guide, there is a very fine outline for the Order of Service for Connectional Lay Sunday. Always is the admonition to be respectful and sync with our pastors. We are fully aware there may be limitations to the Sunday being totally given to Laity to celebrate the Church's Anniversary. We would suggest that you ask, if it is necessary, and take whatever time is allotted to you with thanksgiving. Perhaps Lay Liturgist can be used. Perhaps you can secure a Lay Speaker. A three to five minute Lay presentation can be a profound blessing. Ask, and perhaps the time shall be given unto you. In whatever manner possible, celebrate, celebrate the Anniversary of our great denomination.

May we recommend some useful tools. In compliance with the wishes of the president of our Board of Bishops, Bishop James E. McCoy, in regard to Hymnody, who asked every Church be given the history of a Hymn during our worship services, prior to being sung. The story behind the writing of our Lay Council Theme Hymn, "Guide me, O Thou Great Jehovah", is rich and interesting. Offer the history to your Pastor; provide copies for the Sunday bulleting.

Make Rhandi happy by giving her an article about your Lay Sunday Celebration. Give her information for the Star/Connection.

A word about Leadership . . . Lead, of course, is spelled the very same as is lead. The latter, we want no part of in our process of leading. We, of course, have reference to guidance, a position in front, of and to direct operation. By precept and example, lead. Build Zion with the type leadership exemplified by James Varick, leader 'par exemple'. We recommend Psalm 27:11, "Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain Path".

A GUIDE TO STARTING AN EFFECTIVE LOCAL LAY COUNCIL

SEVEN EASY STEPS

1. Pray
2. Study the Constitution and Bylaws and Consult (Ask Questions)
3. Meet with your Pastor to plan the organization meeting; Present the final plans to the Board of Lay Activities for approval.
4. Organize a Lay Council orientation meeting for the laity of the church;
5. Schedule an election & planning meeting; Elect officers and organize committees.
6. Celebrate the victories, big & small; Give thanks to God for His guidance.
7. Attend District, Conference, and Regional Lay Councils Meetings to learn & fellowship

I. PRAY

Dear God:

We, the laity thank you for Your grace and mercy. Help us to become effective and committed laity to Kingdom building. Give us the patience and courage to listen and obey Your voice through the presence of the Holy Spirit. AMEN

PREFACE

II. WHY ORGANIZE A LAY COUNCIL?

The reason for the existence of the Connectional Lay Council as an arm of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, and for being an organization authorized by the General Conference, is well expressed in **The Book of Discipline** and the **Handbook of the Connectional Lay Council** as follows:

Deepen the spiritual life of the laity.

Disseminate information.

Cultivate denominational loyalty.

Expand the denomination through education and evangelism.

Promote any other interest of the Kingdom of God.

When a layperson gives serious consideration to the purposed of the organization, the individual is made aware of the fact that implicit in these purposes is the "command" to promote the Kingdom of God and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church throughout the world by encouraging laypersons to serve Jesus Christ and to follow Him in the vocations of everyday life.

III. IN BASIC TERMS WHAT IS THE LAY COUNCIL?

THE LAY COUNCIL IS:

A fellowship of Laity and Clergy working together to:

1. Aid in their understanding of their roles in the Church.
2. Find scriptural sound guidelines, training helps and practical ways for implementing lay ministries throughout the Church.
3. Provide resources and the aids needed to evaluate, improve and expand Lay involvement in the building of God's Kingdom.

IV. THE BENEFITS OF A PROPERLY ORGANIZED AND FUNCTIONING LAY COUNCIL

A properly organized and functioning Lay Council will not only "deepen" a layperson's own faith within the Christian community, but also accomplish the following objectives:

Train laypersons for Church leadership.

A GUIDE TO STARTING AN EFFECTIVE LOCAL LAY COUNCIL

LETS GET STARTED

V. THE PASTOR AND THE LOCAL LAY COUNCIL

The Lay Council is an organization of the local church. As such it is responsible to “the pastor in charge”. The council’s initial and continuing approval by the pastor and congregation are necessary. It is important that the Lay Council be a constructive organization, make a real contribution to the life of the church, and deserve the enthusiastic support of the pastor and congregation. Work closely with the pastor. It is the pastor who must coordinate all Church programs.

What is the role of the Lay Council within the local Church? This should be clear from the stated purposes but will be much more visible in what is really done. The Lay Council is not needed to duplicate what the Church and Boards are already doing. It is needed to assist their work when requested, and to make a contribution that would not otherwise be made to the life and the mission of the Church.

VI. THE ROLE OF THE LOCAL BOARD OF LAY ACTIVITIES

1. Administers the activities of the Local Lay Council
2. Appointed by the Pastor and confirmed by the Quarterly conference

Amenable to the official board of the church and to the Quarterly Conference
Governed by the Constitution and bylaws of the Annual Conference Board of Lay
Activities.

VII. TOOLS FOR ORGANIZING AND BUILDING THE LAY COUNCIL

1. The Bible
2. The Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
3. The Handbook of the Connectional Lay Council
4. The written “Histories” of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
5. Collateral Materials from Leadership Training Seminars
Lay Academies, workshops, meetings, convocations, etc.

FOR REFERENCE

VIII. HOW THE CONNECTIONAL LAY COUNCIL CONNECTS WITH THE DENOMINATION

The Connectional Lay Council is a church related organization and an understanding of its relationship to the rest of the Church is essential. The A.M.E. Zion Church believes in doing everything in order. There is an A.M.E. Zion Way of doing things. If this way is ignored, not much will get done. On the other hand, if one understands and works with the A.M.E. Zion Church system, much can be accomplished and support will be forthcoming.

IX. PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF THE OBJECTIVES AND PURPOSES OF THE LAY COUNCIL

1. Deepen The Spiritual Life of the Laity
 - a. Help others to understand their role in the church
 - b. Attend church meetings and prayer services

A GUIDE TO STARTING AN EFFECTIVE LOCAL LAY COUNCIL

- c. Encourage others to join the church
 - d. Participate in bible Study and Sunday School
 - e. Attend church regularly and actively participate
 - f. Teach and practice good stewardship
- 2. Disseminate Information**
- a. Encourage attendance at Members Meetings, Quarterly Conference, etc.
 - b. Telephone members to keep them informed or important information.
 - c. Visit the sick and homebound and keep them informed and engaged.
 - d. Encourage attendance at Lay Council meetings, workshops and other church sponsored educational activities
 - e. Encourage members to subscribe to and read church publications
- 3. Cultivate Denominational Loyalty**
- a. Uplift the church and be proud of your Zion Connection.
 - b. Read the histories written about Zion.
 - c. Learn about Zion, especially the Articles of Religion of the A.M.E. Zion Church
 - d. Know the structure and polity of the church
- 4. Expand The Denomination Through Education and Evaluation**
- a. Attend Members Meetings and Quarterly Conference
 - b. Meet other Zionites and learn about the church at District, Conference and Connectional Meetings
 - c. Read the Bible daily and any other literature that may help you
 - d. Fellowship with other Christians
 - e. Sponsor fieldtrips to some of Zion's "Points of Interest" for education, fellowship and enjoyment.
- 5. Promote Any Other Interest Of The Kingdom of God**
- a. Volunteer to teach Sunday School, Bible School, etc.
 - b. Do neighborhood visitations
 - c. Become active in community service projects and community action programs
 - d. Develop prison, sick/homebound and tape ministries
 - e. Encourage the youth and young adults in the church

Share your faith with others so that they might become believers and be led to Christ

USE THE LOCAL LAY COUNCIL EVALUATION FORM TO MONITOR CONTINUAL EFFECTIVNESS

REGIONAL NEWS

NORTH EASTERN EPISCOPAL DISTRICT

The Right Reverend George E. Battle, Jr.,

Presiding Prelate

Mrs. Marie H. Baxter, Regional Director

New York Conference Lay Convocation

Mrs. Ruth Stevens, Reporter

On Wednesday, June 21, 2006, the successful and spiritual 185th Session of the New York Annual Conference opened with an informative Lay Council Institute at the Long Island Marriott Hotel and Conference Center in Uniondale, New York. Lay Theme: "Renewed Energy for Christ: Rising, Caring, Sharing and Giving God the Glory".

David A. Aiken, New York Conference President of the Lay Council, and Lay officers united in offering warm greetings via program representative Loretta Goff, Long Island District President. The Lay Council Academy theme was "Kingdom Building With A Plan." Presenters included David A. Aiken, Sr. who provided "The Strategic Plan", a partnership model for Lay ministry. In order to fulfill the Lay Council mission statement (to prepare and equip laity for life discipleship in the Kingdom of God by maintaining effective ministries that evangelize, encourage and edify laity) spoke on several points:

- Study to show thyself approved unto God
- Collaborate with bishops, presiding elders and pastors
- Organize more local Lay Councils and grow membership base
- Develop and adopt by-laws at all levels
- Develop mission statement and strategic plan for lay ministry
- Set goals for ministries and membership
- Execute and manage the Strategic Plan

Objectives suggested in the Lay Strategic Plan includes supporting higher education, advertising and promoting events to inform people about lay ministries, formulating/implementing/promoting new and existing proposals for philanthropic activities and/or commitments that are associated with the Lay Council, and devising and implementing operating matrix that edifies, encourages and recruits youth and young adults for ministry through the Lay Council. Current issues such as HIV/AIDS, obesity and same-sex marriage were pinpointed for greater Lay Council awareness and involvement. Upcoming Connectional Lay Council events include an Evangelistic Retreat on October 6-8, 2006 at the Sheraton Imperial Hotel and Convention Center, Durham, NC (919.941.5050 or 800.325.3535. Early-bird registration: \$85 until 9/13/2006; after that time, Registration \$100. Complimentary roundtrip transportation from Raleigh-Durham International Airport. Hotel Rate: \$84.00, plus 13% sales tax.

The Lay Academy continued to provide a Partnership Model for Lay Ministry presented J. Fairbanks Leach (Education Committee Chairperson, Connectional Lay

Council) and Reverend Paul Smith (Pastor, Foster Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church). J. Leach reported 9-1/2 out of 10 laity have a propensity to preach and 7-1/2 out of 10 pastors don't trust the Lay Council. She posed the question, "Where does the power lie: the pulpit, pew or episcopacy?" She answered her own question by saying the jury is still out. However, together we are an important operational factor to Kingdom Building. J. Leach feels this way about the A.M.E. Zion Church, if you can find a better church – join it! In the church there are plenty of jobs to do. In the New York Conference alone, by using her personal survey of numbers to calculate presiding elders, pastors, churches and members, there should be over 4,000 hands to do the work. The drugs of Satan against the church are apathy, disloyalty and lack of knowledge, to often showing evidence of his needle marks among Christians. A wise senior church member from the south had a remedy to enhance church partnering, "chillen us better twine ourselves together" which includes both pastors as the shepherd and members who are the sheep (9 Corinth. 12:2). The Lay Council is not a bureau for pastor removal, the Lay Council is a product like none other – we just need to package it and sell it properly and don't be one of Satan's drugees.

Rev. Paul Smith spoke on "Enlightenment" for the lay church by defining ministry:

- Do God's will
- Make disciples
- Opportunities to serve

Holistic opportunities

Fulfilling the mission of laity through enlightenment deepens the spiritual life:

- Study the Word
- Attend Prayer Meeting and Bible Study

One way to fulfill ministry is to survey the needs of your community – be relevant. Churches are not museums but a building of life. Explore what are the needs of the local church. How do we analyze the data? How do we prepare for this finding?

- Prayer
- Developing Ministries

Learning is a lifelong process:

- New ministry (models) – visit successful programs
- New outlook – change
- New outreach – changing lives

Evaluation

- How are we doing
- Reflect
- Re-evaluate (often)

Celebration

- Never forget to celebrate

During The Bishop's Hour, The Right Reverend George Battle noted the Lay Institute needs to be enlarged. The church should depend upon leaders that are born again, dedicated, anointed. Bishop Battle introduced associating bishop, The Right Reverend Marshall H. Strickland (retired).

REGIONAL NEWS

The Lay Election results are as follows:

President..... David Aiken, Sr.
 1VP Wilhelmina Lee
 2VP Marion Gray
 Secretary Marcella Shelton
 Treasurer..... Ira Golden
 Financial Secretary Lottie Tan
 Chaplain..... Mildred Faulkner
 NYC President. Melvin Cummings
 Long Island President..... Loretta Goff
 Westchester President..... Marie Baxter

The elections were affirmed by a standing ovation as the bishop shook the hands of the newly elected officers. The Lay Institute transitioned to the Augusta W. Printz Scholarship Luncheon where Dana Charlene Jenkins, member of First A.M.E. Zion Church and top scholarship recipient during 1998-2001, addressed the luncheon on her college experience using the topic, "Keeping Your Direction". The keynote address was given by Dr. Jimmy R. Jenkins, 12th President of Livingstone College, who seeks to grow Livingstone's funding and, most importantly, its students. Dr. Jenkins stated being president gives him an opportunity to do something sacred among the three major pillars of our society: Church/God, Family and Schools. The Lay Council donated \$2,000 to the Albert Stout Book Award. High school scholarship recipient is Sherrill Marie Burke of Jackson Memorial (\$4,500). Continuing scholarships recipients are Arthur Monroe (Greater Centennial) \$4,000; Celeste Riveria (Woods Memorial) \$3,000; and Sir Justin Rettie (St. Catherine) \$3,000. The Scholarship Appeal received \$2,700 in pledges and \$7,357 cash, generating a total of \$10,057. The Lay Council Institute closed with the Lay Benediction.

Persons acknowledged: Dr. Betty V. Stith (Past President, Connectional Lay Council) and Jasper McCormick, (Past First Vice President, Connectional Lay Council) .

Visitors: James Davis, President, NJ Conference Lay Council (member, First Church, Patterson, NJ); Charles Wilson, 2d Vice President, NJ Conference LC (member, New AMEZ); Carl Lovelady, Conference President, Western New York (member, Walls Temple); Rev. Timothy Howard, Presiding Elder, New England Conference; Rev. Keith Newsome, Pastor, Walters Memorial; and Rev. Oscar McLaughlin (Albany).

MID ATLANTIC | EPISCOPAL DISTRICT

The Right Reverend Nathaniel Jarrett, Presiding Prelate

Mrs. Helene Zacharrias, Regional Director

Ohio Conference Henry L. Walters Challenge Luncheon and Workshop

The Ohio Conference Lay Council held its Annual Henry L. Walters Challenge Luncheon and Workshop during its Annual Conference in June. Patricia Lewis, host Lay Council President served as the Mistress of Ceremony. After the lunch, the Columbus - Cincinnati Lay Council presented a skit on Leadership written by Mrs. J. Fairbanks Leach.

The speaker was Shirley McConnell, Local Preacher, St. Paul A.M.E. Zion Church, Cleveland, OH whose objective was to review the leadership characteristics found in scripture for effective Christian Leadership. Mrs. McConnell stated that the qualifications of an overseer/leader as described in scripture are that one must be blameless, temperate, sober-minded of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money but gentle not quarrelsome, not covetous, one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence, not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he falls into the same condemnation as the devil. Moreover, he must have a good testimony among those who are outside. Jesus, who was 'The Master Teacher', taught the foundational principles and character traits of spiritual leadership. He taught the disciples and others the true characteristics of true leadership and good religious leaders. She concluded by saying that we need leaders today who are God fearing and who exemplify the model that Jesus and Paul talked about.

Mr. Leonard Watts, 1st Vice President of the Ohio Conference, was the facilitator of the afternoon workshop. He presented the SWOT Matrix (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats). We were challenged to look at our own strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and how they impact our daily walk with Jesus.

The Mary E. Taylor Membership Award this year was awarded to Beth-EI A.M.E. Zion Church, Cleveland, OH for having the largest increase in local Lay Council membership.

Remarks were given by the Ohio Lay Council President, Mrs. Patricia M. Wilson and Bishop Nathaniel Jarrett, Jr. The Luncheon and Workshop concluded by singing the theme song, "Onward Christian Laity" and our closing prayer.



Remember to use the Lay
Council Closing Prayer

Oh, God, our Father, pour
out your steadfast love
upon us and keep us in
your care, now and forever
more. Amen.

Written by Miss Mildred R.
Faulkner New York Confer-
ence

CONNECTIONAL LAY COUNCIL OFFICE

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HOURS

TUESDAYS—11:00 AM—6:00 PM
WEDNESDAYS—11:00 AM—6:00 PM
THURSDAYS—11:00 AM—6:00 PM